

Introduction to the Blackfeet

Blackfeet—Means Many Kinds of People

THE CENTRAL THEME of this book is diversity. In some ways American Indians are different from other segments of the United States population, yet it is an oversimplification to speak of "the Indian" and "Indian problems." There are Indian problems only in the sense that it is Indians who are involved with them in Indian communities. Then, too, all Indians are not alike. Not only do tribes differ one from the other, but there is often great variation within a single tribe. The Blackfeet are not like the Hopi, neither of these is like the Kwakiutl, and all differ from the Menomini: similarly it is impossible to describe the "typical" Blackfeet Indian. Many kinds of people and diverse ways of coping with reservation life are to be found among the Blackfeet, as I will try to show. 121

Albert Buffalo Heart, 1878-1964, was a respected elder and honorary chief of the Piegan tribe of the Blackfeet Indians, who lived in Browning, Montana, the economic and political hub of the Blackfeet Indian Reservation. He was a tall, heavy-set, distinguished-looking man, who dressed in worn, well-laundered wool trousers and shirt, moccasins, a neckerchief, and a hat with a tall undented crown. Buffalo Heart was a poor man by the white man's standards, but to the more Indian members of the tribe he was rich in the things that counted. He had lived a long life, had learned and practiced Indian ways, and was helpful and generous to his many kinsmen and friends. 177 [291]

During North American Indian Days, the annual Indian encampment that is one of Browning's main summer tourist attractions, he would be one of a group of advisers who tried to insure that the ceremonies were properly Indian. If the Sun Dance ceremony was to be conducted, he would be given a principal role, as he knew some of the ritual necessary for its success. He donned his ceremonial regalia—a beaded suit of white deerskin, a Plains Indian headdress, and an air of dignity—to greet distinguished visitors and to officiate in the adoption cere- 177 [521] [796] [792] [591]

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monies in which visiting dignitaries were given an Indian name and adopted, symbolically, into the Blackfeet tribe. If any family conducted a memorial service for a deceased relative, or staged a give-away to honor visitors, he was called upon to be the crier. As crier he announced the import of the ceremony, led in chanting the proper song, or cried out the occasion for the give-away and called out the names of those to be honored with a gift.

In years past he had been employed by the Great Northern Railway as an official greeter of tourists arriving by train at Glacier Park, and as an entertainer at the inns within the Park where he and his friends staged Indian dances for the tourists.

Buffalo Heart, with others of his peers, had a place on the Honorary Tribal Council, and was given a small per diem for attendance at tribal council meetings. He was often chosen to accompany council members on trips to Washington, D.C. for the purpose of lobbying for or against proposed legislation which would affect Indians. In his regalia he furnished a bit of Indian color, as well as advice, to the proceedings.

Buffalo Heart and his fellow members of the Honorary Council felt that they represented the voice of the full-blood portion of the tribe and took every occasion to make long speeches in Blackfeet, urging harmony and trust, and asking for more attention to the needs of the people. But people paid little attention to the speeches; instead they talked, moved about, and impatiently filled in time until the Honorary Councilmen had had their say. On several occasions councilmen told the interpreter: "Tell him to make it short." The people in general felt some pride in their old-timers, but mixed this with a feeling of impatience and bare tolerance when the chiefs seemed to be taking themselves too seriously.

Buffalo Heart, and the others like him, usually lived among clusters of full-bloods in the more run-down areas of town, in small outlying communities, or, in a few cases, in more remote areas of the reservation. Buffalo Heart lived in a small two-room shack on Moccasin Flat, an area of shacks and cabins without sewer or water service, on the edge of Browning. The houses immediately surrounding his were occupied by some of his kin—a married son and his family, two married daughters and their families, and the family group of his brother.

The old man's home was the center for Indian gatherings. Here he and his friends conducted the religious rituals, bundle openings, and other ceremonies they wished to celebrate. Those who were singers would gather here occasionally for a song service—a meeting where they would drum and sing old and new songs. Buffalo Heart served as a tie to the old days, a source of information on lore and ritual, and an available medicine man for those who wished an Indian cure. The younger members of his family might participate in these functions, but usually just watched with a respectful air. As one family member said: "You join in even if you don't believe—it's part of the old Indian ways."

Buffalo Heart, however, was more than a man of the past. He was a medicine man and conducted curing ceremonies, yet he and those whom he had cured more often availed themselves of the services of the local doctors and hospital. Buffalo Heart was known as a Catholic and attended church occasionally, yet he was also considered to be a repository for, and a leader in, the present-day

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is invited, tacitly or directly, and some of the formal occasions for such congregation are medicine bundle openings, curing ceremonies, song services, and private parties. House to house visiting, gatherings of families and friends, the visiting grouping at the formal public activities, in office buildings and stores, and street corner visiting are kinds of informal private interaction. 521 744 574

The Indian Days celebrations are annual affairs sponsored by the reservation community. The tribal council makes an appropriation to underwrite the celebration, and local businessmen make cash contributions or put up prizes for competitive events. The four day celebration, held in late June or early July, is a reenactment of the traditional Blackfeet summer encampment and advertised widely as a tourist attraction. Families who own tipis are encouraged to pitch them on the encampment grounds and to camp there with their families. Indians from other reservations are invited, resulting in a camp circle of fifty or more tipis formed by local people, visitors from the Canadian Reserves—Blood, North Piegan, Blackfoot and Cree—and from surrounding United States Indian communities—Warm Springs, Yakima, Umatilla, Crow, Gros Ventre, Cheyenne, Assiniboine, Flathead, and Cree, among others. Sleeping and cooking tents are erected behind the tepee circle and upwards of seven hundred people live on the grounds during the encampment. Each family camping on the grounds is paid a cash allowance toward their maintenance and shares in a daily meat or food ration. 527

The formal program opens with a parade through the main street of Browning and out to the encampment grounds near the Museum of the Plains Indian, a half mile west of town. A regular program of Indian dancing to the accompaniment of singing and drumming by local and visiting singing groups is scheduled each afternoon, and continues long into the evening if the weather permits. 527 541 595

The dancing sessions are interrupted frequently by both planned and unplanned intermission activities—special dance contests, games, and "give-aways." Some of the last mentioned gift giving ceremonies are sponsored by the Indian Days Committee to honor and give gifts to invited guests from other tribes. Others are put on by individuals and families who wish—and are expected—to give gifts in remembrance of a deceased relative, to give a new and significant Indian name to a child in a public naming ceremony, or to honor some other person by a display of generosity in his name. The person to be honored and his family form a procession and pass four times around the dance arena as the singers drum and sing a favored song. A similar procession is formed for the memorial give-away, and a close relative carries a photograph of the deceased relative. Increasingly distant relatives join the procession with each turn. Quantities of gifts are brought in and at the conclusion of the processional, a crier acting for the family calls out the names of those to be given gifts. Occasionally a tepee with furnishings is given, sometimes horses, more usually blankets, cigarettes, and cash make up the gifts. 527 431

Another almost regularly occurring part of the program is a ceremony in which distinguished visitors are adopted into the Blackfeet Tribe. These people are given an Indian name and a war bonnet, or other tokens of their new status, by an honored elder. In 1960, Indian Days coincided with the U.S. Governors 527 597

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527 Conference at Many Glaciers Lodge in Glacier National Park. Six of the governors
 527 who visited the encampment were honored by adoption and given names, and
 the Governor of Virginia was selected to respond for the others. He began by
 remarking that the people of Virginia felt a special and warm regard for the In-
 dians. "If it had not been for the help of the Indians the Jamestown settlement
 would not have survived that first winter." A Blackfeet standing beside me gave
 me a dig in the ribs with his elbow and said, "that's the day we lost the war."

527 The encampment also provides the opportunity for other forms of social
 1788 expression. Medicine bundles are opened with attendant prayers, dances, and face-
 527 painting. Men may be "captured" to become members of the Dog society, an honor
 527 that must be paid for in goods or cash. People visit from tepee to tepee, drink
 527 coffee, eat, and talk. Sometimes one or more of the elderly Indian-oriented leaders
 will provide a lunch of boiled beef, bread, salad, doughnuts, cookies, cake, and
 coffee to all who wish to come.

524 By midafternoon a stick game or two gets under way near one of the con-
 cession booths behind the tent area and usually continues until dawn. Sometimes
 known as the "hand game," this is a popular and widely known Indian gambling
 game. All that is required is space, two poles, planks, or timbers placed about three
 feet apart parallel to each other, two "bones," or short wooden cylinders about
 1/2 inch in diameter and two inches long, one banded and the other plain, and some
 plain sticks about ten to twelve inches long, usually ten to a side to use as
 markers. Two teams line up facing each other behind each pole. One person starts
 the game by intently shuffling, showing, and after many flourishes hiding the
 bones, one in each hand. His team chants and drums with sticks on the pole in
 front of them to give him support and to confuse the opposition during the hiding.
 Finally he extends his hands so that one of the players on the other side can choose
 by one of several signs which hand holds the unmarked bone. If the "guesser" fails
 to choose correctly, his side forfeits one of their marker sticks and the "hider"
 525 tries again; if he guesses correctly, the bones and roles change sides. The game is
 over when one side wins all of the marker sticks. Bets between individuals, both
 participants and onlookers, are placed before the game begins and other bets are
 made frequently on the results of individual guesses. There are many variations in
 the procedure that I have not mastered. A bettor gets a lot of action for his money
 whether he fully understands what is happening or not. The drumming, chanting,
 joking, as well as the strain of waiting for the outcome of a game in which large
 sums of money are at stake, contribute to an exciting time.

527 People spend the rest of the time during the encampment doing the neces-
 527 sary chores of camp living and enjoying the pastimes appropriate to sex and age—
 the children play games, older people work on costumes, play blackjack, visit,
 loaf, or go into town.

527 In spite of this being a community enterprise with fairly large crowds
 1777 that are attracted to it, the people in relatively continuous attendance are the Indian-
 oriented. The people who camp on the grounds and participate in the festivities
 include and appear to be like the men I interviewed and classed as Indian-
 oriented. In retrospect, I would sort the onlookers into four categories: (a) Indian-
 oriented spectators from many parts of the reservation who spend much time on

128 sion of the characteristics that make for the achievement of high status will describe best the ideals of the society against which the lower rankings are also measured.

554 INDIAN-ORIENTED HIGH STATUS The joint requirements of maintaining
177 Indian identity and achieving this within the political and economic framework of white culture have opened two channels to prestige and leadership within the Indian-oriented group. The ideal leader in this situation would be a man wise in the ways of both traditional Blackfeet and modern American cultures. He would be an authority on how best to be an Indian, yet well educated, skilled, and able to meet the white man on common ground. He would be experienced sufficiently to gain acceptance and influence in white society and to act as an able interpreter of each group to the other. The history of Blackfeet and American relations is too short to have produced such an ideal in one man. Instead, as more and more tribal members become white-oriented, some men gain high status by their greater knowledge of Blackfeet culture as it is known today. These leaders form a least acculturated high status stratum that for the sake of simplicity, will be called the *chiefs*. Others, better educated and more experienced with white culture, find high status by playing the roles of intercultural interpreters and mediators. They are accomplished spokesmen for the Indian-oriented point of view, and as a more acculturated high status class are labeled *interpreters*. There are more than generational differences between these two status types.

Chiefs are usually older men who know and support the currently known traditions and beliefs. They vary in their knowledge, belief and dedication, but all, together, form a repository of what is remembered of the old ways. One of these men recognized that much of the old culture had been lost, "things beyond the memory of even the old timers," but he and others of his status are "trying to show the young people the things from the past," with special emphasis on keeping the language alive. Their qualities and characteristics are those given in the description of Albert Buffalo Heart, so will be only summarily reviewed here.

Through their age, knowledge, and practice of Blackfeet ideals each of these men has gained the respect of a numerous following of kinsmen, friends and people from a particular region who recognize him as their chief, or respected elder. So these men are given respect and loyalty but little political power. It appears that the old leadership structure persists among the Indian-oriented group. People tend to shift their loyalties according to kinship, friendship, and self-interest. The leadership that develops carries responsibilities and influence, but rarely true authority. The chiefs are recognized as links to the past, authorities on tradition, and symbols of the Indian, but as the roles given them will show, these things are peripheral to the present political and economic sphere.

[527] Chiefs perform a variety of public duties that center around their position as authorities on tradition. They serve on the Indian Days committee; they help in planning the program and in the regulation of the camp; they don ceremonial regalia to take part in the dancing and exhibitions that make up the program. If a Sun Dance is held, it should be sponsored by people of this class and the principal roles will be filled by chiefs and their families. They are called upon [746] to greet distinguished visitors and to officiate in adoption ceremonies and give-aways. [547]

speak little English, apply English names to their horses. However, Percy Creighton said that on the Blood Reserve the old, picturesque color names were still in vogue (1947), except for horses purchased from Whites that had been previously named.*

DAILY CARE OF HORSES

Among the Blackfoot daily care of family horse herds was generally entrusted to boys 8 to 12 or more years of age, except during the most inclement winter months when men of the household assumed responsibility for the task. If there were several boys in a family the father usually delegated care of the horses to the most dependable and ambitious lad. Sometimes a younger brother cared for the horses of a young married man. Otherwise the latter looked after his own horses. Owners of large herds, or owners of small herds who were sonless, commonly adopted orphan boys to care for their horses. If a young, single man went on a raiding party to steal horses from the enemy, he chose a poor but reliable and ambitious boy to look after his horses while he was away from camp, rewarding the lad with a colt for his labors. If the young warrior had elderly parents who could not obtain food for themselves, he selected a youth in his late teens to care for his horses, rustle food for his parents in the hunt, and keep them well supplied with firewood. Some poor boys got their starts as horse owners through this service.

Duties of the young herder required that he be up before daybreak each morning to go after the horses where they had been pastured the previous night and drive them to a nearby lake or stream for water. Then he drove them to good pasturage near camp and returned to his lodge for breakfast. The owner generally returned to the herd with him after the morning meal, selected the horse or horses he wished to use during the day, perhaps petted his horses a while, and gave instructions to the boy regarding pasturage for the day. At noon the lad drove the horses to water again. Toward evening he watered the horses a third time and drove them to their night pasturage, where

* The published lists of names for horses employed by the Flathead (Turney-High, 1937, p. 110); Kutenai (Turney-High, 1941, p. 71); Crows (Mandelbaum, 1940, p. 197), and Hidatsa (Wilson, 1924, pp. 194-195) show a similar preference for color names among those tribes. Eagle Bird, Oglala, and Smoky, Kiowa, told me those tribes generally named horses after their appearances. Denhart (1947, p. 232) has pointed out that it was a favorite Spanish custom to name a horse according to the impression received on first seeing the animal. Whether the Plains Indian system of descriptive horse naming was adopted from the Spanish cannot be determined from the facts available. Certainly the coincidence is most intriguing.

No Plains Indian tribe is known to have practiced branding in buffalo days. The chronicler of the Long expedition noted that the Pawnee (met in 1819) had no method of affixing distinctive marks to their horses. The many branded horses seen among the Pawnee were either stolen or traded from the Spanish (James, 1823, vol. 1, p. 439).

Another avenue of advancement for the poor boy was through service to a wealthy man, in caring for his horses, and helping him in hunting in return for his own food and care. Orphans commonly were taken into this service (Grinnell, 1892, p. 219). 565 556

Adoption into a family of wealth and distinction offered another means of advancement for the poor boy. Three Calf cited the case of a little boy found by Boy, a chief of the Small Robes band of Piegan, in an abandoned Gros Ventres camp. Although Boy had children of his own, he adopted the homeless waif. When the lad grew older he cared for Boy's horses. Later he helped in hunting and went on horse-raiding parties. He was successful in taking enemy horses and once took a gun from an enemy. He began to raise a herd of his own. He married a girl of good family, set up a medium-sized lodge, and raised fine pinto horses. He began to acquire the best of clothing and horse gear. Finally, after he had acquired 2 wives and some 30 or more horses, he became a subchief of the Small Robes band. As an old man he took the name of his Piegan benefactor, Boy. 565 556 597 553

The practice of medicine offered a specialized medium of advancement for young women as well as men. A number of highly respected women practitioners were remembered by informants. Through their own visions and/or the teachings of established doctors young people learned the use of various medicinal plants and techniques of their administration. The person who could cure the sick or foresee the future was able to demand payments for his services in horses and other valuables. 565 555 756

Some men and women were able to better their condition through their skill as craftsmen. No individual was remembered who attained wealth solely on the basis of his or her skill in crafts. However, there were men and women of the middle class whose incomes were materially enhanced through their ability to manufacture bows and arrows or pipes of high quality (in the case of men), or lodges, clothing, riding and transport gear (in the case of women). Many fine craftsmen were older men whose age prevented their active participation in hunting or horse raids. 565 555

POLITICAL ORGANIZATION

THE BAND

Wissler (1911, p. 22) properly considered the band "the social and political unit" among the Blackfoot. In 1856, Blackfoot Agent Hatch stated, "Each tribe is divided into bands, which are governed or led by either a chief or a band-leader, the former office is hereditary, the latter depends upon the bravery of the individual and his success in war" (U. S. Comm. of Ind. Affairs, 1856, p. 625). Bradley's ex- 621 622

"The Blackfoot are very fond of their children," wrote Maximilian in 1832;¹⁹⁷ and it would be utterly misleading if today we minimized the passionate warmth that most Blood lavish upon their children, particularly upon their younger offspring and their favorites. But where families are easily broken, where abandonment is not unusual, and where a child on his own initiative frequently seeks a parent substitute, the parent-child relationship necessarily lacks the intensity that distinguishes it in our culture. The trauma of separation is reduced as well as the child's resentment against the parent who has acted without much consideration for his well-being. Not that the hurt is forgotten nor even entirely forgiven, but a Julia Curtis will eagerly recount a visit to a mother who left her at nine to the ministrations of a paternal aunt and married a man on another reserve; a Ned Sloane will speak lovingly of the grandmother who urged that he be "thrown away" because he had caused his mother's death in childbirth; a Myrtle Pointed Plume will show no animosity toward her adopted father (actually her grandfather) although he insisted after she had spent eleven years as a *minipoka* in his household, that she remain with her own parents when he took another wife. [855
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[178]

Early in childhood preference patterns are established and these function quickly in time of small strain or great crisis. One mother said that her eldest son always went to the home of his father's mother's sister when trouble was brewing; she herself spent much of her girlhood both before and after her mother abandoned her father, at her father's sister's. Another, speaking of her various children, said, "Myrtle is her grandfather Pointed Plume's favorite; Fanny is her grandfather William's favorite; Rosalie is her grandmother Julia's favorite; Harold is his father's favorite and Otis is mine." Only one, the eldest, was a true *minipoka* (she had been adopted by her paternal grandfather so he could more easily honor her and, what was equally important, continue to enhance his own prestige); but each of the others felt secure in his own brand of favoritism even if it was less ostentatiously expressed. [591]

Despite their informal status, these lesser favorites expected the same privileged treatment from their warm supporters that true favorites received from theirs, and within reason they were not disappointed. When Julia's Rosalie, a child of seven, spilled water and came weeping to her grandmother because she was afraid her sister Myrtle *might* tell on her (which incidentally she showed no disposition to do), the grandmother's only comment as she took the little girl upon her knee was, "Myrtle is so spoiled." [602
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Boys may find a haven with an older sister, but a young girl would hesi- [858]
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[554]

¹⁹⁷ Maximilian, *Travels*, p. 262.

602 tate to enter a household where she is considered a "distant wife." In most
855 instances, an aunt who has weathered the domestic storms of the early
[593] years of marriage, or a grandmother or great-aunt are the preferred relatives.

597 Adoption brings renewed hope of security to those children who have
[736] been orphaned or deserted, for the society deals none too kindly with these
unfortunate ones. Frequently, they become slaveys in the families that
take them in. Rarely, if ever, do they have an opportunity to make a "good"
marriage. Once adopted, however, their status is immediately improved.
They take their chances with the rest of the children. Some, like the young-
est son of the old chief, Red Crow, may even be made an honored favorite.
All expect to share in the family wealth.

Primarily, however, adoption serves the advantage of the older genera-
tion. A childless pair may take as their own the child of a fecund couple in
the hope that then their union will be similarly blessed; or, having lost a
loved one in death, the sad parents may feel that their only consolation
[173] lies in substitution. But to the question, "Why do you adopt children?"
a Blood will most often answer, "We adopt children so someone will take
care of us in our old age." And so important is this old age insurance that a
poor child will be sought in preference to one with property: "If a child
[181] has property, he will leave us when he grows up." In this competitive
society, the old have little confidence that the man of property will share
it with them, even if he is an adopted son.¹⁹⁹

872 The child, who probably never felt too secure at home, is now separated
[593] from his parents when he is six or eight and placed in one of the two sec-
retarian boarding schools on the reservation. If his home is nearby, he may
have visitors but most of the children, at least in the winter months, have
little if any contact with their relatives. Some remain at school the year
round. For all, however, it is a partial break with Blood tradition and
[178] culture.

872 Ironically enough, in this increasingly individualistic society, it is these
155 boarding schools that offer the most extended experience in joint living and
182 cooperation. Among other things, they have encouraged the girls to take
[572] *taka*. But their general emphasis is so contrary and their strict authorita-
rianism so foreign to the normal patterns of Blood life that their socialising
influence is negligible. To a few children they have been havens from abuse
or family discord, but even those who have benefited most from prolonged
schooling (because they were poor or orphaned) suit their behavior in later
life, not to their teachers' precepts, but to their social station.

[171] ¹⁹⁹ K. A. Wittfogel (*Wirtschaftsgeschichtliche Grundlagen der Entwicklung der
Familienautorität*, pp. 491, 506) points out that lack of security in old age is frequent
in societies where the satisfaction of basic needs depends on "physical strength"
rather than on "careful thought and accumulated experience."

practice was to give first to the older because "they would not live so long as the younger." 000

This system of rank and seniority had its repercussions on personal security. Even though blood bonds were considered extremely stable, cases occur where there was open conflict between brothers. Moreover, a younger brother was a potential threat to an older brother whom he might surpass. Many Swans' war record excelled that of his older brother, and people taunted the brother mildly on this score. Indeed, there was personal humiliation, for the great family name of Many Swans, borne by the older brother, was taken away by the father and given to the younger brother. The older brother also relinquished the chieftainship of the band in favor of the younger. Thus age was no guarantee against being excelled by a younger man even within one's own family. Loss of one's wives was another threat. In fact, judging by the severe and brutal treatment accorded an unfaithful wife at the hands of her husband, unfaithfulness seems to have been an almost intolerable personal affront. Yet we have instances where the correspondent was a younger brother. The fact that the levirate did occur in some cases legalized this relationship but only after the death of the older brother. As if to prevent even this possibility, a male addressed his older brother's wife as "mother," and she replied "son." [558] [553] [622] [558] [684] [587]

Thus if fraternal conflict were possible, the only security in a system of rank is in the group of those with identical rank. Indeed, we have observed that a male cousin, step-brother or twin of the same age was not called "brother" but "comrade." This is the only reciprocal term in Northern Blackfoot kinship terminology with the exception of the remote parents of one's siblings' spouses and the parents of one's children's spouses (*nūax'-soku'*). The relationship of one comrade to another might be extremely close, implying a sharing of wealth, of sexual gratification and of recreation. Though comrades exchanged gifts, there was no sign of competition between them in out-doing the other in generosity. With comrades one's wife was safe, for with their wives one might have easy, ribald relations, though no sexual intercourse. The children of comrades were called "my children," and adoption of one or more of them at the death of a comrade was not uncommon. The age societies supported this solidarity further, for through the hierarchy of these societies one passed with the same group. Indeed, it was not uncommon for comrades to join together to help a poor comrade by paying for his membership. Then as a member of an age group one could vent his feelings against those of the next older age grade by jeering at their accomplishments, possibly sublimating some of the repressed rancor occasioned by their imperious authority. [561] [602] [571] [601] [597] [575] [578] [182] [152]

Here we see that the relation of male to male was one of rank based on sen-

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607 to learn to cook, tan hides, and make moccasins. There was no hazing of the
585 new wife; rather, if very young, she was treated like a child in the attempt
to make her feel at home in this new situation.

593 In addition social dicta prescribed that women be participators in the
562 cultural rewards apart from the warpath. This was mainly the case with
ceremonial life. It was always necessary for a man to have a woman partner
[778] when he obtained the medicine pipe or entered the sacred societies. In these
[575] activities it was usually a wife, though a man might seek another woman to
796 take her place. These women were not ceremonially so important as a male.
593 However, one case shows where a man refused to join the Crazy Dog society,
562 and to overcome his resistance, his comrades took his wife as a member. As
[575] under this circumstance he could not refuse his wife and maintain com-
munity respect, he paid for her membership and sat beside her in all the
meetings. In the Sun Dance alone a woman overshadowed her husband, but
[571] this status assured her husband of a firm marital tie. As Sun Dance vower,
she personified the cultural ideal of womanhood, the woman who above all
was faithful to her husband.

562 Beyond this elevation of the status of women through the necessity for
842 women partners in receiving sacred objects and in participating in general
social life, there lay a mystical concept. Through women came the greatest
treasures the culture offered. This meant in the family that a man might
[603] have children, for children of both sexes were avidly desired. Older people
raised their grandchildren in order to have children in the tipi. It was also
[597] the practice to adopt a child should one's own child die. This pattern of cul-
562 tural rewards went even farther. In obtaining the most sacred root in the
796 Horn and *ma'toki* societies, the root which was the zenith of sacred objects
778 brought to the earth by the woman who brought the Sun Dance, a woman
[575] was necessary. In an esoteric ceremonial act a woman obtained for her hus-
band the root from a man who sold it. This was a very secret and unmention-
[432] able event that separated socially the seller from the buyer until the two
[571] "made friends" at some time when neither owned the root any longer. Thus
581 through marriage the two worlds of the male and the female were united to
582 obtain the rewards of the culture.

Balancing of the Lines

601 The question of lineality arises in any discussion of kinship terminology
602 in its relation to the family organization. We believe that there is only slight,
if any, emphasis on the paternal line.

601 Critical in fixing lineality is the relative weight of husband versus wife's
607 brother. In the foregoing paragraphs a relative balance of the two authori-
ties has been indicated. Ideally, it was a friendly, warm, though respectful
relationship, implying a type of cooperation like that between brothers,

- 593 status was thereby elevated because of having received some sacred objects,
858 and, second, it was an oblique way of stating that one's father was wealthy,
554 hence a hard worker and a man of accomplishment. Further evidence for
paternal glorification may be seen in the almost monomaniac anxiety over
● 597 being an adopted child. Any rebuff that a son might be given was frequently
593 the stimulus for morbid preoccupation over the reality of the blood relation-
[152] ship to the person he called father. In adopting a child, parents took elaborate
precautions to show even greater affection toward the adopted child
than toward their own in order to prevent this child from suspecting his
adoption. When a child or grown person discovered this fact, it was a traumatic
593 experience from which recovery was slow and difficult. Further indication
626 of the importance of the paternal rôle in the life of a male was the
universal comment made when a man deviated from acceptable behavior.
[867] People said, "He did not listen to his father's words." This had direct reference
to the series of moral lectures that every father was supposed to make
593 to his children. Another aspect was the concept of inheritance of personality
827 characteristics from the father. This was particularly true of males who were
supposed to inherit their father's courage in battle, memory for ritual,
generosity, or eccentricities. Females were thought to inherit more from
their mothers. On one occasion the question arose in a discussion with an
informant as to why certain individuals did not listen to the moral lectures
of their fathers. Our informant on this occasion stated that it was because
they had inherited this particular deafness to the paternal sermons from
their fathers who in turn had also not heeded the dicta of their fathers.
- 584 Certain prerogatives accorded the woman's family served to heighten the
importance of the mother's family. Foremost among these was the privilege
of the woman's parents to assume the initiative in soliciting marriage for
[581] their daughter. Indeed, it was frequent that a wealthy man picked a son-in-
law who was poor but energetic with the aim of receiving his assistance in
[858] the camp. We have statements to the effect that on this account daughters
were somewhat preferred to sons in that through them the circle of one's
585 followers and helpers could be more readily enlarged. Of conceivable symbolic
[591] importance was the fact that the woman's parents usually provided the
586 first tipi with its furnishings for the new son-in-law, for this suggests that in
the remote past the son-in-law was actually living matrilocally. Furthermore,
a woman usually returned to the camp of her parents or brothers with
her unmarried children after the dissolution of a marriage. The husband
thereby lost whatever influence he may have had over the children. In the
[736] case of a woman whose husband died when she was too old for ready remarriage,
[888] her sons, by then economically self-sufficient, were expected to care
for her, and they would accord her the authority due an elderly person in
making important decisions.

175 visit the Cree suddenly attacked. Crowfoot participated as a de-
707 fender of the camp, and the good Father distinguished himself for
bravery under fire. After the battle Lacombe gave aid to the wounded
and baptized the dying. A few years later when smallpox plagued
the Blackfoot camps, Father Lacombe returned to say a prayer for
the dying and to bury the dead. For such deeds he received from
the Blackfoot the name "Kind-hearted Person."

175 It is beyond question that Crowfoot and many other Blackfoot
707 admired this white man. Though Miss Hughes's biography of
622 Lacombe does not mention it, our Blackfoot informants state that
a close friendship developed between the black-robe and Crowfoot,
with whom he frequently lived. We may speculate that during the
days in Crowfoot's tipi the priest was asked why he had come to
the Indians and was cross-questioned on Christian ideals. We imagine
that Lacombe replied by emphasizing the brotherhood of man, that
all should live side by side in peace, each aiding the weaker. At first
Crowfoot may have been puzzled by these concepts, for the doctrine
of survival through individually acquired supernatural power was
ingrained in his thinking. Yet in a way these statements could be
comprehended, for the priest who practised constant self-abnegation
had demonstrated "power" to withstand bullets. Just as the owner
of a Medicine Pipe had the protection of thunder power by following
the ritual of the Pipe, by never saying the word "bear," and by
keeping the Pipe in a quiet spot in the tipi, so Father Lacombe must
have been given power by his God to withstand bullets and disease
because of living a life of help to other people. Kindness and gener-
osity within the tribe was also a *sine qua non* of Blackfoot authority,
and Lacombe certainly exemplified these two major attributes of
native chieftainship.

175 Such thoughts may have entered Crowfoot's mind, when Father
622 Lacombe described the way to gain help from God. In any case
Crowfoot soon attempted to carry into practice certain Christian-
like ideals. He ordered that all horses seized in raids from the Crees
by members of the Moccasin band be returned. He himself adopted
a Cree girl in his loneliness after the death of his son.

175 Though for a time he was unable, outside the circle of his im-
622 mediate followers, to carry into practice his idea about returning horses,
Crowfoot's forcefulness in meetings of the chiefs, his kindness, and
his generosity began to distinguish him throughout the entire tribe.
With the return of Big Three Suns and Many Swans during and
after the smallpox epidemic of 1870, Crowfoot, despite a war record

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According to this practice the two must co-operate, though authority is vested in the elder, especially if he is the wife's brother.¹ In case of dissatisfaction the younger is free to move to another more generous person. 596

As adjacent land becomes available, the younger may apply to the agent for these fields in order that he himself, having learned the techniques of farming, may become self-sufficient. The location of houses in small clusters of three and four at mile intervals along many of the reserve roads provides opportunity for groups of relatives and in-laws to live adjacently. Having been granted occupancy of a neighbouring house, the junior family may move there. Obligation of mutual help continues, though there is greater independence than formerly. Mutual help on the fields of one's relatives may be expected, and there will be exchanges of gifts, though no actual division of income. 361 602 602 476 [431]

Expanding such groups still further are the older people who frequently come to live in the same house with or in a house near to their children. Kinship obligations require caring for the indigent, as we have noted previously.² The practice of "bringing up" children of relatives adds further potential members to the original family. This practice is distinct from adoptions where the foster parents conceal the fact of adoption from the child. In "bringing up" a child, a middle-aged man and his wife merely take a grandchild to live with them. Having brought up a family themselves and having a "vacant" house with the unmarried children away in boarding-school, many people feel lonely and ask their relatives for children. These children then live with and are supported by their grandparents, though they frequently spend several days or weeks with their own parents also. Both "bringing up" a child and adoption occur with considerable frequency. 596 855 602 [597]

Thus the individual family is variously expanded on the reserve today by the addition of siblings, certain in-laws, the aged, and children. Numerous clusters of houses show such patterns of relationships. In one of a group of four houses lives an old widow with her grandchildren whom she is "bringing up" for her son-in-law. Next to her lives her sister's son and his family; by Blackfoot reckoning this man is her "son." Across the road, a stone's throw away, live her true son and his children, one of whom is married 596 361 602

¹Cf. p. 72.²Cf. p. 86.

also at Already Singer Woman's home [Mrs. Red Crow; she and the chief adopted several children, including Crop-Eared Wolf]. That was when the sidewalks were still boards in Men with Many Wives [Cardston]. . . .

Owns Many Horses and his wife, Last Rifle Woman, closed the liquor store here in Men with Many Wives. There is a house located here [in Cardston]; the owner's name is Buckskin. The hill where his house is located is called Whiskey Hill. The People that drank were all drinking on that hill. Nowadays the drunks fight. At that time the drunks just danced, they didn't fight. That's what they were doing, they were dancing, when the seizers [policemen] got there. All the drunks got into the wagon by themselves. But the horses were unhooked from the wagon while the People were getting in. The horses run away and the drunks dispersed and took the wagon with them. A few were arrested the following morning [in those days our People could be arrested and jailed for thirty days for having been seen drunk, or for having alcohol on their breaths], but Red Crow had them released.

Red Crow and Owns Many Horses sat with this Big Grey Mouth [one of the Mormon elders with a big gray beard]. Red Crow told him, "My friend, it was very good the way we took each other for a relative, but there is something that is going to separate us. It is that liquor store."

21: Hungry Wolf F-4,5 (ca. 1972) 1977
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Blood

The head wife adopted her grandson, Harry 756
Shade, after his own mother passed away. The 177
Old Man later adopted Harry and raised him. 657
Harry Shade said that Crow-Spreads-His-Wings [597]●
was the only doctor among our People who was
ever heard of being threatened with imprison-
ment if he continued his practice. This happened
around 1921. A woman had an infected breast
and Crow-Spreads-His-Wings doctored her and
gave her some strict instructions, which she did
not follow. Shortly after his visit the woman died.
Authorities made an autopsy and ran laboratory
tests on the infected part to check for poisoning
from improperly used medicines. They found
nothing, but the agent and a Mounted Policeman
came out to his house and told him he would go



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Shot-on-Both Sides about 1940. (Arnold Lupson)

[p.285-A]

back down to Fort Benton. It was very dangerous to be alone out in that country, because of the enemy war parties. So my mother never saw my real father again. She then married Flying Chief, who was better known as Joe Healy. He was my stepfather. 586 587

Joe Healy had become an orphan when he was very young. His parents were camped in a tipi outside of Fort Whoop-Up, near Lethbridge. During the night, some enemy People from the west side of the mountains came and shot rifles into the tipi. They killed Joe's parents and his two sisters. He was wounded in the thigh. Two traders named Healy and Hamilton found Joe, who was still a little kid, so they buried his family and adopted him. He was doctored by some nuns, and later he was sent to school at Fort Shaw, in Montana. He was about the first boy on this reserve to go to school. He learned English and became a scout and interpreter for the Northwest Mounted Police. 736 597 871 191 464

I was at the Riot Sun Dance, the one during which Heavy Head tortured himself. I was sitting inside of the Medicine Lodge, near my grandfather, Iron Pipe, who was one of the Medicine Men. People would come up to him and bring him a filled pipe and sometimes an offering and he would pray for them. 793

As Rosie Davis grew older, she became a student of Miss Wells, an English lady who taught a number of Blood girls the ways of being housewives, British style. Her students became noted housekeepers and influential wives of men on the Blood Reserve. Even at her old age, Rosie Davis speaks very clearly, in a British accent, and uses very good grammar. 177 871

Rosie married Charlie Davis, also the child of a white father and a Blood mother. His father was the first government-appointed official for the Northwest Territories. His uncle was the mayor of nearby Fort MacLeod for many years. Charlie was still very young when his mother passed away. 144 736

29: Lismer E-5 (1939) 1974
NF6 Blackfoot NF6
Blood

ADOPTION PRACTICES OF THE BLOOD INDIANS OF ALBERTA, CANADA

by

Marjorie Lismer

(With an Introductory Note by Esther G. Goldfrank)

ABSTRACT

Adoption is practiced in many parts of the world, but its mechanics are rarely spelled out in detail. The following paper is an effort to correct this lack for the Blood (Blackfoot) Indians living in Alberta in 1939. The introduction of a money economy and life on a reservation brought about certain modifications, but at the time this investigation was made "the Indians themselves" said adoption was "frequent in former times." There is reason to believe that the motives for adoption and the varying attitudes of those who adopt and of those who are adopted have not changed radically through the years. Many parallels in adoption are apparent, not only in other Blackfoot tribes, but also in such North American Indian groups as the Crow, Omaha, Winnebago and Ojibwa.

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INTRODUCTORY NOTE

In April 1972 Margaret Mead sent me Blackfoot data found among Ruth Benedict's papers. In her letter of April 17th Mead wrote: "Of course, treat these notes as you would your own." These data included some kinship protocols assembled by Benedict — but not always labeled — along with a penciled memorandum on the subjects that members of her 1939 "laboratory" on four Blackfoot reservations (one in the U.S.A. and three in Canada) might write on; an outline of chapters for a projected book; the names of those she obviously expected to write them; and two sets of typewritten manuscripts. One manuscript dealt with the Northern Blackfoot and was presumably authored by Jane Richardson whose name appears on an introductory page and who, with her husband, L. M. Hanks, Jr. has published a book on this group. The other manuscript included Marjorie Lismer's reports of her fieldwork among the Blood in the summer of 1939, and a completed paper on their adoption practices. This paper, to judge from the editorial changes in Benedict's handwriting, was certainly

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29: Lismer E-5 (1939) 1974
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residence, band, family connections, household, and societal memberships. These cards have been in my possession for many years and I shall be more than happy to make them available for study to any interested scholar. Finally, if anyone knows the present whereabouts of Marjorie Lismer I would appreciate hearing from them, care of the Plains Anthropologist.

Esther S. Goldfrank

INTRODUCTION

Adoption, in one form or another, is commonly found in most parts of the world and yet its mechanics are seldom recorded in any detail. With the Blackfoot it is now a well established custom and the Indians themselves say it was frequent in former times.

The Blood reserve, where these studies were made in the summer of 1939, is an area of 800 square miles in southern Alberta near the International Boundary. About 1450 people are spread over the reserve, in scattered households, with related families tending to cluster together. There are, roughly, 280 of these households, varying in size from those where several families, either of brothers, or of a man and his married children, live together in the same house.

The more prosperous families often have two houses, a farm where they live most of the summer until after the wheat and oats are harvested, and another house nearer the range where their cattle and horses graze. This does not mean that certain houses are unoccupied for half the year. There always seems to be a relative and his family to be accommodated in the other house. Means of subsistence include grain growing, cattle raising, and horse breeding. Horses, however, are not a source of money to any great extent but are used for exchange within the reserve. Government rations and subsidies are given to families who cannot support themselves. There are about a hundred households on destitute rations. Compared with neighboring reserves, however, the number on relief is relatively low.

A feature of family life that strikes even the most casual observer is the fluidity of the family group. Husbands and wives change partners with great ease and frequency, especially among the younger people. Marriages are very informal in many cases and requires little formality for divorce. This is of special interest to our problem since this breakup of the family frequently leaves

[p. 26-B]

29: Lismar E-5 (1939) 1974
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the children without a home. Generally the children, especially the infants, follow their mother, either back to her parents' home or into a new marriage. But the new husband does not always welcome his wife's children and a problem is created. 586
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This apparently casual attitude towards children would suggest there is little concern for their welfare, that they might be regarded as more or less unwelcome hinderances to their parents' activities. It would be interesting to know the degree to which their presence influences the decision of their parents to separate or to remain together. Probably very little, since no child goes uncared for. Children may sometimes be regarded as nuisances by the younger people, but among the older folk they are definitely desired. They frequently express the wish to have young children about and this is, in a large measure, substantiated by the number of people who take their grandchildren to raise, although not always to adopt. It is felt that a person with no children will have no one to care for him in his old age. It is said that an adopted child knows what has been done for him and out of gratitude will assume more care for his foster parents than will their own children. 855
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[855]

Nearly half the households on the reserve have children living with them that were not born there. The frequency with which children are sent to live outside their own immediate family is quite noticeable. Here I should like to mention my reluctance to rely upon statistics to emphasize my points. I have a record of about 50 cases that may be considered definite adoptions, to which may be added at least 12 doubtful cases. To these are again added 20 or more even more doubtful cases, which may be just prolonged visits by a child to relatives. The 50 cases of adoption cover those of which people are aware, but I do not doubt that there are many more that have long since been forgotten. In the minds of the community the adopted children soon merge with the rest of the family. 597
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Three main categories can be distinguished within this general pattern of mobility. First of all are cases where a child is visiting relatives. These visits may be of prolonged or short duration and vary in frequency. It may be a case of grandparents looking after the child while there is trouble at home between the parents, because there are too many small children to be cared for there, or for no other reason than that it is nice to visit elsewhere. 855
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Blood

Second, there is a more permanent situation which still cannot be included under adoption. It is distinguished from the latter by the Blood under the term *raising*. There is a good deal of confusion between the two, even conflicting information on individual cases as to whether such a one is a raising or an adoption. An examination of the details of the relationship does not always settle the question. However, broadly speaking, a raising is less permanent than an adoption. The responsibility for raising a child is most frequently assumed by close relatives, usually grandparents. The child goes to live with another family but does not sever connections with its own, nor does it assume the mother-father kinship terms for the couple who are raising him. Relatives will say to each other, "I will raise up a child for you and when he comes to school age you can take him back."

There are several cases of children being adopted and in later years returning to their own parents. One boy was adopted by his father's cousin (F M Si D) with whom he lived for about seven years. Then his father and his foster mother quarreled and he took the child back to live with him since he had married again and now had a home. A similar situation occurred when a foster father sent a child to the Catholic school and his Protestant father objected, using this as an excuse to remove the boy. He felt that he was not getting the proper care since the foster father was always drinking.

Are these to be considered adoptions or raisings? Apparently the arrangements were considered permanent when first established. At any rate it can readily be seen that adoptions and raisings cannot easily be separated. Situations that are presumably definite can suddenly change from one to the other. Therefore it appears that the ultimate criterion of whether it can really be called an adoption or a raising lies in the degree of permanence of the new relationship and the amount of contact between the child and the parents he is supposed to have left. But even this is not infallible.

Last of the three main categories are the adoptions, and these, too, can be divided into types. Blackfoot adoptions fall into four main overlapping divisions. First of all, and most numerous, are the adoptions which occur when a child presents a problem created by some disturbing situation in its home, the death of a parent, their separation, or an overcrowded household. At such a time someone who wants a

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child in their home will come forward and adopt it.

Second, there are the adoptions in which the grandparents take the eldest child and assume full responsibility for it. It is this group that is with most difficulty distinguished from raisings.

Third, there are occasions when a child or adult is adopted in order to replace a deceased relative. This may often be, especially among adults, on the basis of actual physical resemblance. Closely allied to this type is that in which the special "friend" of the deceased is taken for adoption. In these circumstances the adopted person maintains a close relationship with the foster parents, but does not relinquish his place in his own family.

Lastly, there is a less tangible reason for adoption, but one frequently expressed, which involves some sympathetic relation of cause and effect. If a woman has been losing all her children she may go to another woman who has been more successful and beg her to take her own baby so that it may have a chance of survival. Conversely, a woman who has had no children will adopt a child and after that she is supposed to start having some of her own. Actually this is not borne out by the facts, but this does not appear to alter the conviction that it is so. One instance is recognized where bad luck in raising children was not forestalled by an adoption. But this is explained on the grounds that it was a white child from off the reservation that was taken.

When there is a child in an unfortunate situation someone with one of these reasons in mind is certain to come forward to assume the responsibility of looking after it. Along with sympathy for the child is a real desire to have it. Circumstances are extremely important in governing an adoption, but the children are taken because they are wanted and not just because these circumstances thrust them upon the foster parents. The two things, the desire for the child and the need of the child for a home, work side by side.

Before going on to the general aspects of adoption I should make further mention of the occasions when the expressed desire is to replace a deceased relative. This may concern either a child or an adult. A man or a woman will see in some younger person a physical resemblance to a child who has died. If it is a child that has caught their attention it will not likely leave its own parents. There will be visiting back and forth and

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There will be visiting back and forth and exchange of presents and probably the use of parent-child kinship terms. However, if the child should ever need another home he will remember he has other parents who will welcome him gladly.

A similar relation can be set up between adults, with gifts and visits, often prolonged, and correct terminology. A man who lived at Brockett, on the Piegan Reserve, came down to visit on the Blood Reserve. His son had died some seven years before this. When he saw a young 20 year old boy he was struck with the resemblance to his dead son. He approached the boy, kissed him and said, "Be my son." The boy made no objection and he was given a horse. The two use father-son terms to each other and the man's other children call the boy brother and seem fond of him. The boy, however, goes only occasionally to visit in Brockett, although the man wants him to go and stay up there.

A similar situation is set up when a boy dies and his parents "adopt" a special friend who is his own age. Recently an 11 year old boy died and the father started calling the latter's close friend "son" and buying him clothes, etc. At the time the little boy died the father gave his friend a horse and saddle. But the "adopted" boy does not leave his own home except for brief visits.

The desire to replace a dead son or daughter does not always involve resemblance, especially when small babies are concerned. In these cases children are requested, often from families in no way hard pressed. Of course such a request can be, and often is, refused but there is a feeling that this is an ungracious thing to do.

These adoptions, if such they can be called, on the basis of resemblance or friendship, are casual and informal. A good deal of property may change hands. For obvious reasons the flow is mainly from the older man to the younger, but the latter's parents may try to do something in return for the gifts given their son or daughter. When a real adoption occurs there is no formal ceremony.

GENERAL ASPECTS OF
BLOOD ADOPTION

Children are adopted at various ages, but most of them are below a year, many only a few weeks or months old. Many others are adopted at two or three years and a few over five, one even nine years of age. But babies, many of them still at the nursing stage, are most commonly adopted. Older children are usually not adopted, although

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if necessary someone is sure to look after them.

Boarding schools have introduced a new factor into this question of age. If separation or death of its parents occurs once the child is in school the need for a home is not so pressing, and the boy or girl can usually be accommodated with relatives for the holidays without phrasing it as an adoption. It is also possible to remain in the care of the school throughout the year.

Children in the great majority of cases go to relatives for adoption, although the relationship may be remote. These are often relatives acquired through adoption the previous generation. The families to which these children go are almost equally divided between the relatives of the mother and the father. There are instances, too, where no relatives are involved. In these cases the stated reasons for adopting were that they wanted children, or were sorry for some child and feared that it would not be well treated under some new conditions, such as the remarriage of the father or mother.

It is said that girls and boys are equally desirable, likewise the children of either strangers or relatives. Although the great majority of children taken are boys, this does not seem to me significant, for one does not hear of girl babies being passed over. It is natural that most of the children should be taken by relatives since they would be the first to hear of the need for adoption. In many cases the families would be living close together, and it would mean very little adjustment for the child to settle in a new home. In one instance a baby and its father were living with the latter's father's sister and her husband, and when the father married again he just left the child with his aunt who adopted it.

Similarly, from the point of view of the foster family there is likely to be little disturbance of the household. There is constant visiting of both children and adults, and when a more permanent relationship is assumed it does not disrupt the existing conditions.

In the majority of cases when a child is introduced into a foster home there are no young children living there at the time. There may never have been any in that household or they may all have grown up and left. In the few instances where young children were still there, there seems to have been little disturbance. In one case a younger girl was adopted after a boy had been taken, and it was remarked that no conflict arose between them since they had previously been playmates, living near one another. I am inclined

29: Lismer E-5 (1939) 1974
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to believe this is frequently the case.

In the households that have adopted children, or are raising them, one might expect to encounter rivalries between the siblings and the adopted children. However, these rivalries are minimized to a large degree through age differences between the children. Where several adoptions have occurred in one family one can see how this operates. An adopted child was ten years old and already in school when a boy was born into the family. Both these children were married and away from home when a third child, a five year old boy, was adopted. In such a situation there is minimal opportunity for conflicts.

It is almost invariably said that adopted children are exceptionally well treated. It is thought that the adopted child is often accorded better treatment than a man's own child. There appears to be a good deal of truth in this, for adopted children seem to be consistently well cared for, to the best of their foster parents' ability. Naturally, the number of things done for them depends upon the wealth of the adopting family. In a prosperous one the child might even be considered *minipuka* or favorite child, a more or less institutionalized way of showing special affection for a child.

It is felt to be quite natural for a man to be more concerned over the care of an adopted child than over his own. In the first place, he desired the child enough to ask for it. If he doesn't look after it carefully people will talk about him and say that if he cannot do better than he is doing he ought to return it. To be forced into such a course would be a great disgrace. The Blackfoot, who are materialists as well as sentimentalists, also point out that when a child has grown up and is in a position to care for his parents, he will be especially grateful to those who gave him a good home. Thus the child becomes something of an investment which will mature later when the parents are growing old and need the support of sons and daughters.

Lowie, speaking of the Crow, says that adopted children are exceptionally well treated, as if this were compensation for the subconscious feeling that the tie is after all fictitious (Lowie 1920:78).

A situation in which an adopted child is given preferred treatment over a man's own children seems fraught with trouble. One would expect any number of cases where there was dissension, to say the least, between the children in a family. But instances of this sort are rare. There is one

29: Lismer E-5 (1939) 1974
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case where a man's own children resented the adopted child. In this instance the newcomer was nine years old when adopted and came from another reservation. But the adoption of as old a boy and as complete a stranger as this is not common. It is said that a man's own children might feel even more affection for a foster brother or sister merely because they felt sorry for the child that was taken into their family. Of course, it must be remembered that in the majority of cases a child is adopted by a couple who have no children at the time and do not acquire more later, at least while that child is still young.

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In most of the stories under discussion it was not revealed how the property was apportioned at a man's death between his own and foster children. There are only a few cases where it is definitely said that property was willed to an adopted child, in some instances sharing equally with a man's own children. According to agency records there have been no disputes arising out of the distribution of property willed in this manner.

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A child does not usually benefit at the death of his real parents if he has been adopted elsewhere. Legally he could claim against his father if he dies intestate, since the government does not recognize Indian adoptions. But property varying from many horses to occasional gifts of clothing are frequently given to the child by his own parents during their lifetime. If the child does not know who his parents are, these gifts are explained on the basis of gifts from an older brother, a brother-in-law, cousin, or even a grandfather.

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There are varying degrees of warmth and friendliness between the real parents of the child (if they are living), and those who have adopted him. In the first place it is more than likely that they are close relations, often living together at the time of the adoption. If this is suggested through some breakup in the child's family it is likely that one or both of the parents will move further away. It is said that great respect and friendship is set up between the two families. But there are many cases where the families never have anything to do with each other. In one instance the foster mother quickly removed the child if she happened to encounter the real mother on the street. In another case there was definitely ill-feeling between the two families when a girl's own father tried to get hold of the horses her adopted father was setting aside for

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[P.30-A]

her.

Frequently friendly relations can be established, however. In any case it is unlikely that they were strangers before the adoption. There is constant visiting, and even if a young child does not know who his real parents are he is generally well acquainted with them. When children are in boarding school both real and foster parents often visit them, bringing little gifts of clothing and food. In many instances, however, the family that gave up the child is too poor to be able to do anything for it.

For the most part there is little interference from the real parents once the child has gone elsewhere, in spite of continued close association between the two families. In one case a Catholic girl was adopted by a couple who wished later on to send her to the Protestant school. They asked her real parents if this would be all right and their answer was that the other couple had adopted the child, were responsible for her, and they had nothing to say in the matter.

Real and continued interference was evidenced in the case already mentioned where the girl's own father tried to get some share of his daughter's horses from her adopted father. After the death of her first husband the interference continued to the extent of her own father insisting she marry her deceased sister's husband, a man with good crops and plenty of money.

TERMINOLOGY

If the child is adopted at any early age, before it is talking, it is to be expected it will call its foster parents by the mother-father terms. When adopted by grandparents they, too, will be given the parent terms, and their own father and mother will become brother and sister, or be called by the appropriate affinal terms. The child may also refer to them by name as if speaking of someone outside the family. It also gives rise to some strange usages in terminology. One girl adopted by her father's parents called her mother and father sister and brother, although she knew they were married.

Later on, when the real relationship is revealed, there may or may not be a change. Sometimes if relations with one's real parents are very close, even to the point of the son or daughter living with them for a period, then the mother-father terms would be applied to them also and usually retained for the foster parents as well. In one instance the mother's parents adopted a girl, and she called them mother and father until a

29: Lismer E-5 (1939) 1974
NF6 Blackfoot NF6
Blood

few years later when the girl's mother came to live with them. At this time the kinship terms were revised and the girl began calling her mother by the correct name and used the terms grandfather and grandmother for the others.

Learning that one is adopted does not always alter the kinship terminology, but it does call for new attitudes. Children learn of this at various ages. Some are adults before they find out. One man was sitting beside his adopted mother in the tipi listening to a tirade from his wife who, in her anger, shouted that the woman he was sitting beside was not his mother. The man got very angry at his wife, but was convinced of the truth of her remark. However, he was very fond of his foster mother and made no attempt to return to his own parents. But he was quite upset about it for a time.

For the most part, children learn of their adoption in school where someone is sure to tell them, usually with the idea of making mischief. When they take this information back to their foster parents it is frequently denied for a time, but the truth comes out eventually. In the few cases one can get an expression of opinion it seems that the children generally feel upset at the news. One girl cried a great deal and finally went back to her parents. Even when a child does decide to go back to its parents, this may be only in the nature of a prolonged visit.

PROPERTY EXCHANGE

It is repeatedly stated as one of the techniques of adoption procedure that property, usually in the form of horses, is given to the adopting parents along with the child. This is always phrased as a means of ensuring good treatment for the child. This feature always appears in general discussions on adoption. One informant, a little more sophisticated than the rest, saw the property transfer as lending dignity to the proceedings since people would not want a child of theirs to go as a pauper to his new home.

In fact, a transfer of horses is rare. In only ten of 50 cases was property involved, and of these six were somewhat indefinite. Of course there are many reasons why this could not be carried through, even if all the parties involved did consider it theoretically correct and desirable. When the child is taken because it is an orphan there is no property involved, nor in cases when neither the family nor the surviving parent have anything to give.

29: Lismer E-5 (1939) 1974
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Blood

There are, however, one or two instances of wealthy men letting a child of theirs go to another family and several more instances where the families were of average wealth and quite able to care for their children. On one occasion, wealthy parents had had bad luck in raising children and let their latest child go to give him a chance of survival. For the same reason the son of a chief was adopted by a neighbor who was not a relative, who had no children and wanted one. In yet another instance the wife of a fairly wealthy man had twins, a boy and a girl, and the father's older brother adopted the son when he was about four months old. The two children, now over 20, do not yet know they are twins.

In one case where the mother had some property and was asked to allow the child to be adopted she deliberated a long time and finally said,

"You have come to take my child away from me. But you must promise that you are going to look after the boy in every way. You know that the father died and there is no one to look after us. Now you can take the boy and I'll give you two horses, a gray and a gelding, both broken. I'll give you these horses so that you will look after the boy in every way."

She further added that if the child should be unhappy he must be brought back. In a few days he was returned to his mother and she said that they were to keep the horses, even though the child had come back. Apparently it is customary, in the few cases where property has been exchanged, not to return this if circumstances demand the return of the child.

BAND AFFILIATIONS

At one time the Blood were associated in bands; but when they settled down to sedentary life on the reserve, changes occurred and the functioning of the bands was disrupted. At the present time band association is a tenuous thing. Some of the younger people do not even know to which band they belong. However, most of the Blood are conscious that such a grouping does exist. Apparently band affiliations are not considered in the question of adoption, at least nowadays. Often times, of course, a child does go to a family of its own band, but this is due to the frequency of adoptions by close relatives, rather than a desire to keep the child in the band. Whether the adopted child belongs to the band of his father or of his foster father is uncertain.

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29: Lismer E-5 (1939) 1974
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Some say the child retains the band membership of his own father, or if the father is unknown or a white man, he should belong to his mother's father's group. Others insist that the child belongs to the band of his foster parents and his children belong there also. However, band affiliations seem easily changed to fit circumstances, for both children and adults. Loyalties seem to be to the group with which one is living, as was true in the old days.

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UNCOMPLETED ADOPTIONS

Not all adoptions are completed. There are cases where tentative arrangements have been made and then cancelled. Many years ago there were two married brothers, the younger one having a small daughter. The wife of the older brother frequently took the child to her own tent and kept her until her mother fetched her away. One day, the mother came for the baby and, after nursing her, she gave her the name, Kept-to-Oneself. When she heard this the older brother's wife told her husband, "We had better not take the child again. I don't think they will let it go. I heard them giving it the name Kept-to-Oneself." So they dropped the whole idea of adoption which had been in their minds. In this way no request was made and no refusal given, but the mind of each party was clearly revealed to the other.

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More outright refusals may be given when a direct request is made. But my impression, and it is only an impression, is that in most cases the feelings of all concerned are known before any formal request is made.

As an indication of how uncertain a thing adoption can be there is the instance of a young boy who was adopted twice. He was adopted when he was four or five years old by his mother's sister and her husband, who had no children and were anxious to have one. A year or so later this couple separated and a former husband of the boy's mother more or less forced the foster father into letting the child go to him. Since the child has grown up he speaks of both men as "father" but has little to do with either.

POSITION OF THE AGENCY

So far as the Agency is concerned only those adoptions which follow the regular Canadian legal procedure are recognized (John Pugh, Indian Agent for the Blood Reserve, personal communication). But few Indians take the trou-

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29: Lismer E-5 (1939) 1974

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ble to comply with these laws and there is nothing in the Indian Act which provides for legalizing an Indian custom adoption.

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However, if a child leaves its own home and goes to live elsewhere, requests are often made to have its name transferred to the new household on the Treaty list. Treaty and Interest money is payable to the head of the family in which the child is living, unless special arrangements have been made. There are cases where parents have attempted to get the child returned to them, usually at the time when Treaty and Interest money is about to be paid.

There is only one recent case of adoption through court procedure on the Agency records. In this case the child was adopted by his mother's mother and her husband. However, the Indians say the child is now back with his mother again, because his grandmother left her husband, and went to live with her daughter, the child's mother.

Property disputes involving adopted children appear to be rare. If a man dies without voicing or writing a will he is considered intestate and one third of his property goes to his widow and the rest to his children or their heirs. Only if a child were legally adopted could he inherit under these conditions. He could inherit under a will but he might have his claims contested by close relatives of the deceased. If a child is adopted in the Indian fashion, but not legally, he can claim against the estate of his own parents when they die. But legal adoptions necessitate relinquishing all claims on the parents.

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CONCLUSION

The Blackfoot picture is not unique. It follows a general Plains pattern. Lowie (1912:219) reporting on the Crow, mentions the frequent adoptions of small children by their grandparents. It was even stated as customary for a young couple to give their firstborn child to the father's parents. With the Blackfoot grandparent adoptions it seems to be equally the mother's and father's family which is involved, with perhaps a bias towards the former. It must be remembered that this also includes all the instances where illegitimate children are cared for by the mother's family, as one would naturally expect.

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Among the Crow the children of fellow clansmen may be adopted and, under these circumstances, presents are expected from the parents in return or the trouble of bringing up

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29: Lismar E-5 (1939) 1974
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the child (Lowie 1912:219). The Blood, however, phrase this transfer of property not as a payment, but a form of insurance, "so that you will be good to the child."

Blackfoot adoptions are often for the purpose of replacing a deceased member of the family, most frequently a baby recently dead. This is found among other North American groups, including the Crow (Lowie 1912:179-248), Omaha (Dorsey 1884:265), Winnebago (Radin 1923:139), and Ojibwa (Landes 1937:16) to name only four of them. The Fox (Michelson 1925:passim) adoptive feasts, during the mourning ceremonies in which a substitute is taken by the relatives of the deceased, is an extension of this general idea. The Blackfoot, however, do not carry it to this extent. The Blackfoot tend to establish a close relationship, a form of adoption, with the special 'friend' of a dead son. This is reported, too, for the Winnebago. The whole adoption idea and its ceremonial aspects are common enough throughout the North American tribes; but that presents a special problem, far too large to be considered here.

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[P33-A]

122 never know. Ordinarily, I should have passed such an encounter
132 without undue personal involvement, but fatigue, uncertainty with
regard to the whereabouts of Jim and the Chief, and the distressing
emotional iotacism which at times plagues even the best of us, con-
spired to evoke within my personal self an almost articulate resent-
ment that my unannounced return to the Reservation had not been
rewarded with a panorama somewhat more inspiring.

122 By the time I had turned off the ignition and gotten out of the
123 station wagon, I found myself being converged upon by two Indian
men, each from his separate abode—and neither, I soon learned,
destined to elevate my currently subterranean morale. One man was
quite young and effusively, almost obsequiously, eager to please,
and from him I learned that the Chief is very much alive indeed and
that he and Jim are over in Canada, at Gleichen, attending a Black-
foot Sun Dance (Medicine Lodge). Damn, but I wish I were with
them! The Sun Dance is the very focus of Blackfoot religious ritual,
and it is becoming an increasingly rare episode in Indian life. Only
the very old Indians know how properly to sponsor and conduct the
ceremony, and since the Holy Woman (an Indian lady, always
above any moral reproach, who makes the formal vow to the Sun)
(199) and all the other principals must undergo a fast of four days, those
(185) persons who are both qualified and physically able to participate in
the Sun Dance are very few indeed.

There has not been a Blackfoot Sun Dance here in the States for
several years, and I doubt seriously that there will ever again be
one. The so-called Sun Dances held by Plains Tribes other than the
Blackfoots are ersatz gestures at best and are significantly performed
during the height of the tourist season. These ceremonies are in the
same category as the "adoption" ceremonies—innumerable Whites
believe that they have been "adopted" by one Indian tribe or an-
other—which are not adoption ceremonies at all but merely name-
giving ceremonies (one of which, thanks to the publicity-conscious
Great Northern Railway, can be purchased from even the Black-
foots for fifty bucks). A true Blackfoot adoption ceremony involves
a ritual of four days duration, and it is a very serious and a rather
strenuous procedure for all parties involved. One does not properly
become adopted into the Blackfoot tribe; one becomes an adopted
member of a Blackfoot family, with all the privileges and responsi-
bilities attaining to true family membership. Very, very few persons
of White blood have ever been awarded this honor.

177 The Blackfoots were the last of the Western tribes to have inter-
course with the White Man, and they never had any more to do with

622 the Chief's contention that Two Guns had been his adopted brother.
129 The records at the museum, of course, had indicated that Two Guns was a half-brother to the Chief, and Dr. Schaeffer had suggested that possibly some element of sibling rivalry had motivated the Chief in his denial of Two Guns as a brother. But this did not sound like the Chief to me, and I was determined, records or no records, to confirm to my own satisfaction the validity of the Chief's assertion.

115 I was not long among the Blackfoots before realizing that my best and most reliable sources of information were not official records but the older Indians themselves (although I learned too that one must exercise considerable discretion in the choice of one's informants because certain old-timers, out of petty jealousy or other childish motives, will seize upon any opportunity both to glorify themselves and to denigrate their neighbors). I also learned that even some of the best informants will hesitate to tell you that you have been misinformed about certain events—simply because they do not wish to embarrass you—and that the best approach is to pretend complete ignorance of the subject at hand. So when my discussion with an elderly Blackfoot lady began to touch on the White Calf family, I asked her simply, "What do you know about Two Guns White Calf?"

115 The lady said, "Two Guns was not really a White Calf. My mother was in the camp, up in Canada, when Two Guns was born, and she
622 told me that Two Guns' mother was a North Blackfoot woman. His father was a Canadian too. Two Catching (Two Catcher) had a baby at the same time that Two Guns was born, and when her own baby died, Two Catching adopted Two Guns and raised him as her own child." (The informal adoption of children among the Blackfoots was and is a very common occurrence.)

622 At last I had verified the Chief's statement that Two Guns had been his brother by adoption only, but in the interim I had learned that the local legend of Two Guns White Calf, "the Indian on the buffalo nickel," was not easily to be dissipated by mere facts to the contrary. The story of Two Guns and his immortal fame had been
000 a selling point among the local merchants for many, many years—countless tourists had purchased commercial photographs of "The Buffalo Nickel Indian"—and neither the business interests nor the civic pride of Browning was about to accept this heresy without a struggle. Two Guns definitely *was* the model for the buffalo nickel! Everybody *knew* that he was! When Two Guns had died, officials from Washington had come all the way to Browning just to